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**ANALYSIS OF THE
SEMANTIC
DEVELOPMENT OF
SELECTED
EQUESTRIAN
TERMS
BA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to bring more attention to the understudied field of equestrian terminology. It studies the semantic change of 15 terms in equestrian specialty field which have been divided into two categories: 'colours' and 'gaits and movements'. The purpose is to determine whether the terms originate from equestrianism or outside of the field, whether one of the categories is more likely to originate from either one of them, if the terms that originated in equestrianism have their meanings broadened outside of it, and processes of semantic change are identified.

The work begins with an introduction to the background and the structure of the work, followed by literature review that introduces semantic change and its categories, figurative language, and metaphors and metonymy. The information for the analysis is gathered mainly from the online version of Oxford English Dictionary but other sources are used as well to determine the formation, usage, meanings and semantic change of the terms. Based on the information, conclusions are made under every term to determine their origins, development, and processes of semantic change.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Hereby, some of the abbreviations and specific terms that will be used in this work are explained.

Dressage – an equestrian discipline of schooling a horse in obedience and deportment (OED). Edwards (2008: 356) describes dressage as “the harmonious development of the physique and ability of the horse. As a result it makes the horse calm, supple, loose and flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with his rider.”

Etymonline – Online Etymology Dictionary.

Equestrianism – pertaining to horses, horse riding (OED). Here: everything that has to do with horses and the sport of horse riding.

FEI – *Fédération Équestre Internationale* or International Federation of Equestrian Sports. The governing body of equestrian sports around the world and the overseer of both olympic and non-olympic disciplines (FEI 2020[B]).

OED – Oxford English Dictionary.

INTRODUCTION

Having ridden horses as a hobby for more than ten years, I have become well accustomed to the language used in the field of equestrianism. There are terms that are unknown outside the field and one can only see or hear them being used in places where equestrian activities are held, and terms that are used both in- and outside of the field. Having learned more about different vocabulary-related topics during my studies in university, I have often found myself trying to analyse the terms I use when talking about my hobby in English. I am especially interested in the history of these terms and changes in the semantic field. In the early process of searching for information for this paper, I also realized that equestrian terminology is an understudied field (Joszko 2016; Pawłowicz 2014). Therefore, it seemed to be a good idea to put together two of my interests and analyse some of the well-known terms in equestrian terminology.

Out of all the areas of linguistic change, semantic change has received the most public attention (Traugott 2006). I find this topic interesting as well and therefore it seemed fair to write a paper about something that I and hopefully the readers of this paper find interesting also. The semantic field of equestrianism is studied. Special focus is on figurative meanings – especially metaphors and metonymy because those are the most prominent uses for the terms discussed. It is important to recognise figurative meanings because these help to see how different meanings have developed.

The paper focuses on the semantic development of 15 equestrian terms that are divided into two categories: colours, and gaits and movements. The research questions are as follows:

- Do most equestrian terms discussed in this work originate from equestrian specialty field, from other areas of life or are they a mixture of both?
- Have the terms that originated in the field moved outside equestrianism?

- Which of the two categories of terms is more likely to originate from either equestrianism or outside the field?
- What processes of semantic change can be identified in these terms?

Eight terms denoting certain coat colours in horses will be studied under colours, and seven terms under gaits and movements. I picked these categories because I have always been interested in horse colours and the origin of some of the terms used to describe the colours. Horses can perform many different gaits and movements, which has led to the creation of a great amount of terms used to describe them; I picked out a few that seemed the most interesting to me. Each term will be analysed as follows: how the current form of the term was formed; what are and have been its uses and meanings both in- and outside of equestrian terminology; a conclusion based on the gathered evidence whether the term originates from in- or outside of equestrian terminology. If a term has an uncertain background or different uses of a term originate from different areas of life, a discussion about it might follow.

The main purpose of this work is to determine whether the terms mostly originate from equestrian specialty field or outside it and whether one category is more likely to originate from either of them than the other. Furthermore, I hope to bring more attention to equestrian terminology and specialised vocabulary in general, because these are relatively understudied and worthy of further research.

The work begins with literature view which introduces semantic change, metaphors and metonymy. It is followed by analysis which is divided into two parts: first, the terms for colours and then the terms for gaits and movements. The paper ends with a conclusion and list of references that is divided into primary and secondary sources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic change is constant. This paper is concerned with semantic change, which has received the most public attention out of all the areas of linguistic change (Traugott 2006). According to Hughes (1988: 9), semantic change “concerns a change of meaning undergone by an individual word in the course of time”. It is not a narrow field; semantic change encompasses several aspects such as lexical change and changes in register as well. There are schools that do not agree with this definition. For example, Traugott (2006: 124) does not consider lexical change equivalent to semantic change because there are additional factors to consider. They also state that ‘semantic change’ refers to both processes and results in reference to either the external world or linguistic sense.

It might seem as if change in meaning happens unpredictably but, as Leech (1991: 18) notes, there is actually “a pattern of processes whereby one meaning gives rise to another”. These could also be regarded as categories of semantic change. There appears to be no standard set of categories, each author has a different number of processes that they consider most important. Traugott (2006: 124–125) identifies the following six major processes:

1. Broadening or generalization is when words take on a broader range of meanings. For example, *post* originally stood for ‘a timber set upright’ but the meaning has expanded to be used in the mail system (Etymonline) from where it in turn has come to use to describe ‘rise and fall in the saddle, usually when riding trot’ (OED).
2. Narrowing or specialization is when the range of meanings the word has narrows. For example, Old Norse *gjorð* ‘girdle, belt, loop’ is now used specifically as *girth* ‘belt around horse’s body’ (Etymonline).

3. Amelioration is when a word takes on positive connotations. For example, *straight from the horse's mouth* 'the original, authentic source of information' (OED) gives a positive connotation to *horse*. While *horse* itself is a neutral term, there are proverbs that have given it either negative and positive connotations depending on the context.
4. Pejoration or deterioration is when a word takes on negative connotations. For example, *foal* is the young of equines, *tattered as a foal* used to describe a ragged, rough or shaggy person (OED).
5. Metaphorical change occurs when a concept is projected onto another that denotes something different but has some resemblance to it. For example, *hold your horses* is used to tell someone to be patient or to hold on (OED) although it implies something different.
6. Metonymic change is when one word is associated with another along the lines of already existing connections. For example, *chestnut* can be used to refer to a deep reddish-brown coated horse (OED).

As noted, there are more kinds of semantic change. To name a few, described by Hughes (1988: 14–16): euphemism is when words in areas which reflect taboos (such as sex, race, illness, death, etc.) are given a more favorable substitute, such as *sherbert* in place of *shit*. Dysphemism is the opposite process, for example, *to push up daisies* means to be in one's grave, dead (OED). Emotive intensification is when a classically derived word, such as *phenomenal*, is used in emotive ways.

Register, one of the aspects Hughes (1988: 17) identifies as part of semantic change, “refers [...] to language variation according to social role or social situation, especially to the degree of formality”. To put it simply, it determines the tone, the situations, and contexts where it is appropriate to use a certain word. For example, *piebald* is used neutrally to describe horses

with black and white colouring but outside equestrianism it is also a derogatory term that describes something that is ‘composed of differing or incongruous parts’ (OED).

Semantic change is related to semantic fields. According to Lehrer (1985: 283), “a semantic field is a set of lexemes which cover a certain conceptual domain and which bear certain specifiable relations to one another.” The present paper focuses on the semantic field of equestrianism, which consists of many different lexemes. The terms analysed in this paper belong to this field. For example, *palomino* and *piaffe* are related in the context of the present study in the sense that they are used in equestrian terminology and, therefore, belong to the semantic field of equestrianism.

Lehrer (1985) also stresses that it is important to not look at each word in isolation only, but to study whole sets of semantically related words. This is because semantically related terms could have shared a common history of semantic change which could help when studying their development. For example, the majority of the terms analysed under ‘gaits and movements’ are used specifically in the equestrian sport of dressage and, bearing that in mind, it is possible to find parallels in their development.

Word meanings can be literal and figurative. Dancygier and Sweetser (2014: 4) state that “figurative means that a usage is motivated by a metaphoric or metonymic relationship to some other usage, a usage which might be labeled literal.” To put it simply, as Van der Meer (1999: 105) claimed, figurative use always means there is a literal use. On the other hand, the existence of a literal meaning does not ensure that there is/are figurative meaning(s). Many words are polysemous and figurative meanings are highly common. According to Dancygier and Sweetser (2014: 4), polysemy is “the relationship between multiple related conventional meanings of a single word”. Therefore, it could be that figurative language cannot exist without polysemy.

This paper examines more closely metaphoric and metonymic change because figurative usage is motivated by a metaphoric or metonymic relationship to literal usage (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014: 4). Van der Meer (1999) points out that dictionaries often recognise mostly only literal meanings of terms, and figurative meanings are neglected. He stresses the importance of learning about meaning extension in vocabulary learning. Equestrian vocabulary is, for the most part, often missing from dictionaries – this might be because it is specialised vocabulary. However, it may also stem from the fact that many of the terms are probably figurative meanings next to literal meanings and have not been documented properly.

It has been long recognized that some meaning change is metaphoric or metonymic (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014: 3). Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 6) state that “[t]he essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” For example, *healthy as a horse* implies being strong and in good health, horse is being used as a metaphor here. People often assume that metaphors are largely only used in poetic aspects and fail to see the great amount of metaphors that they use daily (Van der Meer 1999). There are no laws in the creation and changes to the meanings of metaphor – once a metaphor is in place, there is no situational correlation needed for it to change further, although exceptions exist. They can motivate multiple meanings for a single word (polysemy) and different directions for meaning change, but they usually do not bring the new meaning to broad convention nor do they erase earlier meanings (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014). Most terms under ‘gaits and movements’ have metaphoric meanings, which are studied more closely in the analysis.

Metonymy has a referential function (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 37) and is about part-for-whole relationships, when a part of an item replaces the whole of it (Šeškauskienė 2013: 264). For example, in *she is riding a bay*, ‘bay’ refers to the reddish brown coat colour (OED)

of the horse and this one attribute of that specific horse is used to refer to that whole horse. Metonymy is closely related to metaphors but the former is based on correlations contrary to the latter. Metonymy can motivate the directions of meaning change as well. One of the most common changes is associated with brand names and products – a salient brand name might be used to refer to the product they are associated with (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014). A good example from the semantic field of equestrianism is the gadget known as *martingale rein combination* or *draw reins combination* which is shortly known as *Thiedemann reins* or just *the Thiedemann* after creator of the gadget, the name is used in marketing the product as well. Part-for-whole relationships are a common direction for historical meaning change. For example, words for ‘hand’ come to mean ‘arm’ (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014: 108). However, the same cannot be said about whole-for-part relationships, ‘arm’ does not become ‘hand’. Where there is a part, there must be whole but a whole can exist without parts (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014). Coat colours of horses could all be used as metonyms including all the terms analysed under ‘colours’.

Semantic change is happening constantly and it can be divided into several processes or categories. Different authors emphasise different categories but the six brought out by Traugott (2006) are taken into account in this paper, along with a few described by Hughes (1988). Lehrer (1985) stresses the importance of semantic fields, and not looking at each word in isolation only can help to identify parallel patterns in development. Figurative meanings are of high importance next to literal meanings because they often give rise to new meanings. Figurative meanings are born thanks to metaphoric and metonymic relationships to some other meanings (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014). At first glance, these two phenomena might appear the same, but metaphors are experiencing something in the terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 2003) and metonymy replaces a whole with a part (Šeškauskienė 2013). All of these points are important in studying semantic change.

ANALYSIS

The analysis is based on the different definitions of the terms in the online edition of Oxford English Dictionary. Occasionally, Collins Online Dictionary and Online Etymology Dictionary are used among with other sources that help to further determine the usage and history. The description of each term begins with how the current form was formed. The developments of meanings in equestrian terminology and other areas of life are then brought out separately and summarised to determine whether the term originated in equestrianism or outside of it. It is determined whether the different meanings are literal or figurative as well. Where possible, types of semantic change are identified. When the background of a term is uncertain, a speculation might follow.

All the definitions are from the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), if not cited otherwise. Definitions in apostrophes are direct quotes.

Colours

Terms denoting colours are mainly used as adjectives as in '*he has a chestnut horse*' or '*look at that dun horse*' but can also be used as metonyms, as in '*he was leading a chestnut*' where the colour 'chestnut' substitutes the whole exact horse he is leading. Back in the day, colours were often used as parts of horses' names as well, which rather seemed to serve a descriptive role as opposed to proper nouns that are mostly used today. For example, Curwen Bay Barb, an important stallion in the creation of the Thoroughbred breed (Edwards 2008: 121), was named after his owner (Henry Curwen), his coat colour (bay), and his breed (Barb).

Colours are mostly figurative in meaning and, in most cases, they have a literal meaning that implies the figurative ones.

Palomino is a borrowing from Spanish. The term originates from Latin *palumbinus* ‘of wood pigeons’, presumably followed by Italian *palombino* ‘dove-coloured’ and is the result of adding the *-ino* suffix to Spanish *Paloma* ‘dove’ (Etymonline) which originates from late 12th century. The literal meaning of it in Spanish, according to different sources, is ‘young dove’ (Etymonline) or ‘dove-like’ (De la Mont 2012).

In Spanish the term is used to denote a variety of white grape – *Palomino Fino*. This is the first definition offered in OED as well and seems to be the literal meaning. However, according to Luyten (2014), the grape is said to have been named after a knight named Fernán Palomino who was of some importance during the Reconquista (Luyten 2014).

‘A light golden-brown or tan-coloured horse with a white pale mane and tail’ is called a *palomino* which is the figurative meaning. More specifically, according to Edwards (2008: 224), the Palomino Horse Association Inc. defines an ideal Palomino horse as:

The skin may be either dark or of a golden color. The coat color must be no more than three shades lighter or darker than a newly minted gold coin, with no smudges. The mane and tail should be white, with no more than 15 percent of darker hair in either.

Sources describing palomino horses usually mention that the origins of the term are unclear and there are a number of theories. Edwards (2008: 225) suggests that it could be directly related to the grape or *paloma*, the word for dove. De la Mont (2012) supports the dove theory but adds that it might also be connected to a conquistador named Juan de Palomino who is said to have ridden a golden horse. Looking at the evidence presented here, the dove theory seems to be the most plausible and the meaning of *palomino* has broadened. It is clear that it is a derivation of *paloma* and that in Spanish *palomino* means ‘dove-like’. Therefore, at one point, *palomino* came to use as a metonym for dove-like horses. Based on the evidence, *palomino*’s equestrian meaning originates outside equestrianism.

Buckskin is formed of two nouns: *buck* and *skin*. *Buck* originates from Old English *buc* and *bucca* ‘male deer’ which became indistinguishable in form after 11th century. This form itself is from Proto-Germanic *bukkon* (Etymonline). *Buck* has two primary meanings – ‘male deer’ and ‘a man, especially fashionable’ which both originate from around 1300 (Etymonline).

Skin originates from around 1200 from Old Norse *skinn* ‘animal hide, fur’ which is from Proto-Germanic *skinth* (Etymonline). Today, *skin*’s literal meaning is ‘the natural covering or integument of an animal removed from the body’.

Buckskin is from around 1300 and literally means ‘the skin of a buck’. The meaning has broadened and today it also denotes ‘leather made from the skin of a buck’, ‘a kind of strong twill cloth’, ‘breeches made of buckskin’ and, more generally, ‘the colour of buckskin’. These all appear to be literal meanings, except the latter one. People wearing clothes made out of buckskin used to be called *buckskins*, especially American soldiers of the Civil War (Collins 2020) and Native Americans (Etymonline); this use is now obsolete and was a figurative meaning.

In US the term is also used to describe a horse of tan coloration, from very light (cream) to very dark (bronze) (ABRA 2020: 36), this is a figurative meaning. It can act as a metonym to describe buckskin-tan coloured horses. The meaning clearly originates from outside equestrianism.

Dun was formed by conversion within English. It is from Old English *dunn* ‘dingy brown; dark-coloured’ (Etymonline). This is probably related to the Celtic base of Early Irish *donn* and probably also Welsh *dwn* which both denote shades of brown.

The literal definition of *dun* as an adjective has remained largely the same: ‘dull or dingy brown colour’, although a now obsolete figurative meaning also exists describing a person’s

thoughts characterised by abstractedness or idle musing; later it was described as serious and gloomy reflection. In the 1620s a verb emerged – *dun* meant ‘to insist payment of debt’. It was a noun for an ‘agent employed to collect debts’ (Etymonline). The verb *dun* is perhaps connected to Middle English *dunnen* ‘to sound, resound, make a din’ and ‘privateer, a private vessel licensed to attack enemy ships during wartime’, the latter shortened from *Dunkirk*, the French port from which they sailed (Etymonline).

In equestrianism, *dun* colouration is described as “some shade of tan, from very light (cream) to a dull or smutty brown (earth tone) (ABRA 2020: 36).” Again, this can be used as a metonym. Semantically, it appears that initially *dun* broadened but has narrowed back into just describing the colour. Visually, dun colour in horses might seem very similar to buckskin but according to the American Buckskin Registry Association Rulebook (ABRA) (2020: 36), duns must have a dorsal stripe.

The exact origins of the word remain unclear but it seems as if it was used to describe dingy brown colours elsewhere before it was picked up in equestrianism. It could be the other way around as well – it might have been used first to describe the horses. The information about origins differs in between sources and each source offers something that the other one does not seem to recognise – therefore it is difficult to speculate which way it might have been. It is also hard to pinpoint whether the colouration in horses goes under the literal or figurative meaning because it is largely the same as literal but I will consider it under figurative because according to ABRA rules cited here, registered dun horses have a wider range of shades than the literal definition suggests.

Sorrel is from mid 14th century and stems from Old French *sorel* (from *sor* ‘yellowish-brown’) which is perhaps from Frankish *saur* ‘dry’, from Proto-Germanic *sauza*

(Etymonline). There is also a small perennial plant named *sorrel* which originates from late 14th century from Old french *surele* (from *sur* ‘sour’) (Etymonline).

Sorrel describes a bright chestnut or reddish brown colouration which is possibly the figurative meaning. The sorrel plant could be connected to this as brown dye can be obtained from the roots of this plant (Grae 1979), although the name could have emerged from the fact that the plant has a sour taste (*sur* ‘sour’). Mainly, the term is used to describe ‘a bright chestnut or a reddish brown colour’ in horses and human hair. *Sorrel* can be used as a metonym.

The exact origins seem to be unclear but it is known that sorrel plants have been cultivated for a long time (Kiple and Kriemhild 2000), therefore I suggest that the term for the colouration came from the name of the plant – it broadened. On the contrary, while according to Online Etymology Dictionary both uses emerged in 14th century (the colour mid- and the plant from late 14th century), the difference in time is very short, it is difficult to determine exactly which meaning it was used to connect with first. It is highly possible that they have developed simultaneously. Consequently, the term *sorrel* in equestrianism, where it describes a bright chestnut horse, possibly originated from outside equestrianism because the dye from the sorrel plant was perhaps there first, and horses similar to that colour were described later.

Chestnut originates from *chesten* from around 1510s (Etymonline), a late form of nouns *chesteine* (‘a chestnut tree’) and *nut*. *Chesten-nut* emerged from Middle English *chasteine*, from Old French *chastain*, from Latin *castanea* ‘chestnut, chestnut tree’, from Greek *kastaneia* ‘nut from Castanea’, a place probably named for the trees (Etymonline). *Chesten-nut* was reduced to *chestenut*, *chestnut*, and *chesnut*. The current form *chestnut* was adopted by Johnson.

Chestnut is known as a type of a tree and the nut it produces (Etymonline), these are the literal meanings. Figurative meanings have broadened the range of meanings and include ‘name of a variety of apple’. OED claims it is not in use anymore but it is still used to describe apples with brownish colouring. In slang, *chestnut* is ‘a story that has been told before’; anything that is ‘too often repeated, trite or stale’. It emerged in 1885 and is probably from the 1816 melodrama “The Broken Sword” by William Dimond where an often repeated story involving a chestnut tree figures (Etymonline). OED suggest that it has arisen in the US newspapers in 1886-1887 which contained numerous circumstantial explanations palpably invented for the purpose. It is possibly a mixture of both because the timeline matches. This use could be considered an emotive intensification because it has an emotion attached to it.

In equestrianism, *chestnut* does not only refer to a deep reddish-brown colour but to ‘the hard knob in the skin of a horse at the inner side of the fore-legs’, possibly because it is shaped like the nut of the chestnut tree. Both meanings could be considered metonymic because they replace a part with a whole.

Here, it is quite clear that *chestnut* originated from outside equestrianism and is predominantly used to describe the tree and the nuts it produces. Probably the colour of the nuts inspired the use of the term to describe similarly coloured horses. The chestnut tree seems to have been the catalyst of all the figurative meanings.

Pinto is a borrowing from Spanish *pinto* ‘painted, mottled’ from around 1250 or earlier, from an unattested post-classical Latin *pinctus*, variant of classical Latin *pictus* ‘painted’.

The term was originally used to describe a member of any peoples inhabiting southern Mexico who had distinctive mottled skin – this is now deemed historical but seems to be the first meaning of the term. This came to use around 1874. The second meaning, possibly

figurative, describes horses with mottled coats, marked black and white, appeared in 1860 (Etymonline).

It is interesting to note that in the case of this term, both meanings appear to be metonymic – describing a whole with one word. The word is a direct borrowing from Spanish and it seems as if in English it does not have a literal meaning, both uses appear to be figurative. However, according to Dancygier and Sweetser (2014), when there are figurative meanings there must be at least one literal meaning. I suggest that the meaning describing the colouration of horses could be the literal meaning here because, contrary to the other meaning, it is still in active use in equestrianism today. However, it is clear that the term came to use from outside equestrianism and has existed long before entering the English language.

Edwards (2008: 225) remarks that the British distinguish between piebald and skewbald coats in the pinto. The former describes a coat with patches of black and white, the latter with patches of white and any other colour. In the US, *pinto* can mean both the skewbald and piebald.

Piebald was formed in 1580s from the nouns *pie*, as in ‘magpie’, and *bald* in its older sense ‘spotted, white’, referring to the black and white plumage of the magpie (Etymonline).

Pie originates from classical Latin *pīca* ‘magpie’ which was reinforced by Anglo-Norman and Old French *pie*. Originates from mid 13th century (Etymonline).

Bald’s origins are uncertain but Online Etymology Dictionary connects it to *ballede* from around 1300 ‘wanting hair in some part where it naturally grows.’ It could possibly be from Celtic *bal* ‘white patch, blaze’, combined with the Middle English adjectival suffix *-ede*.

In OED, *piebald* is marked as being chiefly derogatory term, describing something ‘composed of differing or incongruous parts; motley, mixed’ which implies that this is pejoration. The definition for black and white horses and other animals appears to have been emerged around the same time. Similarly to *pinto*, it is not clearly understandable which of these is the literal meaning and which figurative but I suggest that the definition ‘of two contrasting dark and pale colours’ must be the literal meaning. There seems to have no significant broadening taken place as it seems that the meanings appeared at the same time and the basic sense of the definitions is same – to describe something with two different colourations/parts.

Piebald appears to have come from outside equestrianism as it was first used to describe things similar to magpie and was picked up to be used on horses as well. There appears to be no date as to when *piebald* was exactly first used in equestrianism so it is debatable. It was initially connected to magpie, therefore I suggest that it moved to equestrianism later.

Skewbald originates from 1650s from *skued* ‘skewbald’ which is of unknown origin, and *bald* (Etymonline). The meaning of *skew* is interestingly unknown, OED speculates it might be from Old French *escu* ‘shield’. There is also a close resemblance to Icelandic *skjóttr* the history of which is equally debatable.

The term has only one meaning – ‘irregularly marked with white and brown or red, or some similar colour’ and that it is mainly used when describing animals, especially horses. The term has one literal meaning and can be used as a metonym.

Skewbald is so far the only term that appears to have had began from equestrianism and has largely stayed there, although there are mentions of it used to describe other animals as well. It appears as if the term was created in response to *piebald* to have something similar to use on horses that are white and any other colour. The history of it is largely unknown and there

appears to be no certain meaning of *skew*, although it looks as if it was just a random word that had to be similar to *pie* yet it had to indicate the opposite. This is certainly the most interesting term under ‘colours’ and worthy of future research.

Gaits and movements

The following terms express movement. Two of them are part of the basic natural gaits of horses (*trot* and *canter*) and the others are elements presented in the sport of dressage. These terms can all be used both as nouns (as in *please perform a piaffe*) and verbs (as in *the horse cantered across the field*), and have metaphoric connotations as well.

Canter has two different literal meanings and two different formations. First version of *canter* (noun) are ‘professional beggar’ which emerged around 1600 and ‘one who talks religious cant’ which appeared in 1650s (Etymonline). This version is the merging of the verb *cant* and the suffix *-er*. *Cant* presumably represents the Latin *cantus* ‘singing, song, chant’ but there are theories that it might be connected to Irish and Gaelic *cainnt*. The exact origins remain unclear.

The second version is directly connected to equestrianism: ‘a moderate or easy gallop’ (Etymonline). It is also used as a verb ‘move with a moderate or easy gallop’ (Etymonline). This version originates from 1630s and is a contraction from *canterbury* ‘to canter’ (Etymonline). This is directly connected to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* where it was the pace of the mounted pilgrims with which they rode to Canterbury (Etymonline). In his work about the book, Tatlock (1906: 485) refers to an entry in *New English Dictionary*: “*Canterbury pace* - supposed originally to designate the pace of the mounted pilgrims.” This proves that originally that gait in horses was known as *canterbury* and it has contracted to *canter*.

Furthermore, the noun *Cant* (that stems from the first version) used to denote the secret language of the criminal underworld and vagabonds, which were notorious in the Reformation and Renaissance times (Hughes 1988: 105). Therefore, *canter* in this context is ‘one who uses the ‘cant’ of thieves,’ or is ‘one of the ‘canting crew’.’ In 17th century *canter* used to be a nickname of the Puritans as well because of their ‘religious cant.’ These uses are now archaic. The first version has definitely broadened but it appears to be not widely in use anymore, although these meanings are not considered obsolete.

The second version is interesting as it appears to have emerged metaphorically, which is unusual as metaphors rarely bring new meanings into broad convention (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014). *Canterbury* was used to describe the pace of the pilgrims who headed towards the place called Canterbury which appeared to be a convenient term to call the pace with which they went, therefore the place was the metaphor for the pace. The term has stuck, although in a shortened form, but it certainly is a metaphor for Canterbury and the pilgrims who travelled there.

The first and the second versions appear to have little to no connection with each other so the equestrian meaning will be discussed individually from here on. It can not be said exactly if *canter* originated from outside equestrianism or not but its roots are definitely connected to horses. The city of Canterbury in England has no special connection to equestrianism, therefore it must solely stem from the fact that the pilgrims in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* rode horses. If the pilgrims did not ride horses, *canter* would possibly not be used to describe the pace today. In conclusion, it can be said that the term *canter* emerged from equestrianism.

Trot originated from around 1300 from Old French *troter* ‘to trot, to go’, from Frankish *trotton*, from Proto-Germanic *trott* ‘to tread’, derivative of *tred-* (Etymonline). According to Online Etymology Dictionary, the term was coined in equestrianism.

The literal meaning of *trot* is ‘a gait faster than a walk and slower than a run’ (Etymonline) and it has broadened – there are many figurative meanings. To name some – ‘to move briskly or quickly’, ‘to jog (a child) on one’s knee’, ‘to bid against at an auction in order to force up the price (slang)’. Further meanings arise when adverbs are added: *trot out* ‘lead out and show paces of (a horse)’, also ‘to walk out with, as a lover’ , *on the trot* ‘continually moving without intervals for rest.’ Each of these denotes an activity done briskly or quickly, or something moving up (and down), imitating the action of trotting. Therefore, *trot* is a metaphor in all of these meanings.

Trot is not confined to its literal meaning and has a large amount of figurative meanings, possibly the most amount of meanings out of all the terms studied in this paper. Based on the evidence presented above, *trot* was first used to describe the gait in horses and therefore originated in equestrianism.

Rein back is different from other terms studied in this paper as it is a combination of the verb *rein* and the adverb *back*, making it a phrasal verb. The verb *rein* originates from around 1300 from the noun *rein* which denotes a ‘strap fastened to a bridle’ (Etymonline). The use of it as a verb was first recorded in 1580s and is defined as a figurative extension of ‘put a check on’ (Etymonline).

The adverb *back* emerged late 14th century, shortened from *abak*, from Old English *bæc* ‘backwards, behind, aback’ (Etymonline). It is defined as ‘to or toward the rear or the original starting place; in the past; behind in position’ (Etymonline).

The term is specific to equestrianism and the literal meaning is ‘to check the speed of a horse by pulling back on the reins’. It has a metaphoric use/figurative meaning outside equestrianism denoting spending means to control something strictly (Collins) which is used mainly in political context. It could be considered an euphemism (Hughes 1988) in the sense

that it is used as a non-direct version of ‘controlling something strictly’, although it is not considered a taboo. Hughes (2010: 18) states that “all the classic formulations of political correctness show avoidance of direct reference to some embarrassing topic or condition,” which explains the use of *rein back* in politics as several dictionaries (Collins Dictionary, Oxford Learner’s Dictionary) give examples of the use of the term solely in politics.

Rein back is an element in horse training where the horse is being made to go backwards and because of the heavy reliance on reins, it can be associated to pulling back. This movement is also used to get out of ‘sticky situations’, for example, when the horse acts up, rein back can be done to attempt to bring the horse back under control (Baker 2019). This also explains why it is used in politics as a metaphor to describe similar situations. It is evident, that in the case of this term, the meaning has broadened outside equestrian terminology and has been adopted metaphorically mainly in politics.

Passage has, similarly to *canter*, two different definitions and formations. In this case, only the equestrian meaning will be studied. (Outside equestrian terminology, *passage* denotes ‘the action of passing.’) The term is a borrowing from French *passager* from 1678, after Italian *passaggiare* ‘to go, walk, stroll.’

The term is used specifically in the equestrian sport of dressage, and the noun is defined as ‘a slow, elevated trot, in which legs are raised and lowered in diagonal pairs with a graceful and prolonged suspension.’ Interestingly, OED defines the verb as ‘to move sideways in riding, the horse making controlled and exaggerated stepping movements.’ It is important to note here that according to FEI’s Dressage Rules (2020[A]: 21) there is no sideways movement presented in passage, there is an apparent mistake in OED’s definition.

According to Giacomini (2017), the etymology of *passage*, and most French names of other dressage elements used in equestrian sports, actually originate from Italian language, but

were later transformed phonetically and shortened in the mouths of French students who travelled to Naples to learn this new equestrian art in the 16th century. France had a considerable equestrian influence on the rest of Europe, therefore the terms they used to describe these movements were adopted elsewhere as well. *Passegiatta*, which means taking a leisurely and stylish walk in Italian, was shortened to *passage*. The movement of passage could be described as stylish, and because of the prolonged suspension, the horse does not gain ground quickly when performing it. Therefore, it can be figuratively compared to walking in a stylish manner. *Passage* seems to have been a metaphoric extension that went into broad convention in a specific field.

Passage existed before it was first used by French students to describe the dressage element and the term acts as a metaphor for walking stylishly but with horses. The original form *passeggiatta* existed before it was shortened into *passage* that was used to describe the movement, therefore it can be said that the roots of the meaning of this term are outside equestrianism, although it was the usage in dressage that triggered the semantic change.

Piaffe is a borrowing from French *piaffer* ‘to act ostentatiously’ from 1578 and another meaning ‘(of a horse) to lift its legs alternately’ which is from 1677. According to Giacomini (2017), *piaffer* originates from the Italian *de piede fermo*, which means firming one’s feet and was used in the context of ‘trotting on the spot.’ It was shortened to *piaffer*, the English later adopting the derivative German spelling: *piaffe*.

OED defines *piaffe* as a horse ‘moving with a high, slow, step, lifting the feet in the same manner as in the trot but without gaining much ground,’ which can be described as ‘acting ostentatiously.’ Outside equestrian terminology it is used to describe ostentatious movement and parading as well (now considered archaic) but, looking at the dates presented above, the latter meaning existed first.

The etymology of *piaffe* runs parallel to that of *passage* as both terms act as metaphors for a certain kind of movement that has been used to describe similar movement in horses and has lead to narrowing, creating a new term. *Piaffe*'s roots are also outside of equestrianism and the change was brought upon by the usage in dressage.

Travers is a borrowing from French *traverser* from the end of the 10th century. It can also be called *traverse* which has the exact same origins. However, *traverse* is mainly used in law and legal contexts and denotes going against, opposing, countering and also describes something passing, travelling, or extending through or across something.

Traverse also denotes moving in a transverse or lateral direction, which is connected to the equestrian meaning – ‘a dressage movement in which the horse advances parallel to the side of the arena while maintaining such a position, the head and forequarters being closer to the wall and facing straight ahead, while the hindquarters are angled into the arena’.

A horse performing the *travers* moves in lateral direction, therefore, it could be that this term came to use from the French term *traverser* denoting such movement. However, the term could have its roots in Italian, as Giacomini (2017) stated that majority of the French dressage terms originate from that language. However, the small list of terms he gave as an example, does not include *travers*, therefore, it is debatable. Nevertheless, *travers* appears to have risen from the meaning of *traverse*, being therefore a metaphor for moving in lateral direction. While the evidence here points otherwise, I believe that the term might have come from Italy along with other dressage terms but because there is no evidence pointing towards Italian etymology, the term most possibly could be an exception and formed outside equestrianism.

Pirouette is a borrowing from 1706 from French *pirouette* ‘spinning top; pirouette in dancing’, from Middle French *pirouet* ‘spinning top’, from Gallo-Roman root *pir-* ‘peg, plug’ and the diminutive suffix *-ette*.

The literal meaning of *pirouette* is ‘an act of spinning round on one foot or on the points of the toes, as performed by a ballet dancer’ and ‘a turn or twist; an elegant, showy, or complicate manoeuvre’ seems to be the figurative extension. In dressage, the movement is described as ‘a full circle move by a horse pivoting on a hind leg while walking or cantering’. These all describe twisting or turning actions done on the spot, making *pirouette* a metaphor for such actions.

The term was first used to describe spinning tops and then moved to dancing (especially ballet), eventually it was picked up in dressage because all these movements are essentially the same action: turning on the spot. Dressage is often said to be ballet or dancing on horseback which might not only be because of the pirouette movement but for other elegant movements performed as well, several of these terms have already been studied above. *Pirouette* is a good example of a flexible metaphor, to say so. It is evident that the term originates from outside equestrianism.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to analyse the semantic change of 15 equestrian terms divided into two categories – ‘colours’ and ‘gaits and movements’ – and determine whether the terms originated from the field of equestrianism or outside it, whether the terms that originate in the field have broadened outside of it, is one of the categories more likely to have began from equestrianism or outside it, which semantic change processes could be identified. I used the online version of Oxford English Dictionary as the basis for information alongside a few other dictionaries (Collins Online Dictionary, Online Etymology Dictionary, Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries). I gathered information about the formation of each term and their different meanings, both literal and figurative, and analysed the beginnings and the semantic processes these have gone through. Based on the gathered information, I drew conclusions and speculated about these points and tried to determine did the terms originate in equestrian specialty field or outside of it.

The literature review introduced semantic changes and the categories, the importance of semantic fields, and did an overview of figurative language, focusing on metaphors and metonymy.

As per evidence presented in this paper, most equestrian terms analysed here originate from outside the equestrian specialty field. There were no major differences between the two categories – terms both under ‘colours’ and ‘gaits and movements’ equally originate from outside the field and just one and three from equestrianism, respectively, and one under ‘colours’ remained unclear. The only term that originated from equestrian field under ‘colours’ was *skewbald* and there appears to be little to no semantic broadening outside the field; the term developed in equestrianism and has largely stayed there. Three terms under ‘gaits and movements’ that arose from equestrianism were *rein back*, *trot*, and *canter*. *Canter*

has not broadened further outside of its equestrian use, although there was also the exact same term, that had a completely another literal meaning and developed separately, which has more meanings but those do not seem to be in active use today. *Rein back* has broadened outside the field as a metaphor that is mainly used in politics. *Trot* has broadened widely and it has many figurative meanings.

There can be no distinction made whether either the terms for ‘colours’ or ‘gaits and movements’ are more likely to originate from equestrianism; both sets of terms equally originate mostly from outside equestrian specialty field. Therefore, based on the evidence, most equestrian terms presented in this work originate from outside of the field.

Out of the processes of semantic change introduced in this paper, broadening was the most common. There were a few cases of narrowing and a pejoration. Majority of the terms began from metaphoric (‘gaits and movements’) or metonymic (‘colours’) grounds because the equestrian meanings often originated from figurative meanings.

The number of terms analysed in this paper is too small to generalise and further research is needed to determine whether most equestrian terminology originates from in- or outside of equestrianism. Equestrian terminology is an understudied field and any further research could help equestrian enthusiasts and others interested in the field understand this diverse specialised language better.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Annie Saavan

**Analysis of the semantic development
of selected equestrian terms.**

**Valitud ratsutamisega seotud
terminite semantilise muutumise
analüüs.**

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Annotatsioon:

Selle töö eesmärk on pöörata rohkem tähelepanu ratsaspordi terminoloogiale, mis on alauuritud valdkond. Uuritakse viieteistkümne ratsutamisega seotud termini semantilist muutumist, mis on jagatud kahte kategooriasse: 'värvused' ning 'allüürid ja liikumised'. Töö eesmärk on välja selgitada, kas terminid pärinevad ratsaspordist või väljastpoolt, kas üks kategooriatest pärineb suurema tõenäosusega ühest neist kui teine kategooria, kas ratsaspordist pärinevad terminid on sellest valdkonnast ka väljapoole laienenud ja tuvastatakse semantilise muutumise protsessid.

Töö algab sissejuhatusega, mis kirjeldab töö tausta ja ülesehitust, millele järgneb kirjanduse ülevaade, mis tutvustab semantilist muutust ja selle kategooriaid, kujundlikku keelt ning metafoore ja metonüümiat. Terminite analüüsiks vajalik teave on kogutud peamiselt Oxford English Dictionary veebiversioonist, kuid terminite kujunemise, kasutamise, tähenduste ja semantiliste muutuste määramiseks kasutatakse ka muid allikaid. Selle teabe põhjal tehakse iga termini juures järeldused, et teha kindlaks nende päritolu, areng ja semantilise muutumise protsessid.

Töö tulemusena leiti, et enamus analüüsitud termineid on pärit väljastpoolt ratsutamisega seotud sõnavara. Kahe kategooria vahel märkimisväärseid erinevusi ei ilmnenud – mõlemast kategooriast pärit sõnad on enamasti pärit väljastpoolt ratsutamisega seotud sõnavara. Terminid, mis olid pärit ratsutamisega seotud sõnavarast, oli kahel juhul neljast kasutus laienenud märkimisväärselt ka väljaspool hobumaaailma. Semantilise muutumise protsessides esines uuritavatel terminitel kõige rohkem laienemine, oli ka paar näidet ahenemisest ja üks tähenduse halvenemine. Enamus terminitest olid kas alguse saanud või muul moel tihedalt seotud metafooride ja metonüümiaga.

Siin käsitletud terminite arv on liiga väike, et teha üldistavaid väiteid, selleks on vaja edasisi uuringuid. Ratsutamisega seotud terminoloogiat on vähe uuritud ja loodan, et see töö aitab pöörata sellele tähelepanu ja ajendab tulevasi uuringuid.

Märksõnad: Inglise keel ja keeleteadus, terminoloogia, semantiline muutus, ratsutamine, hobused.

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